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ABSTRACT

Research suggests that interaction between native speakers (NSs) and second language learners (non-native speakers) (NNSs) is characteristically different from speech between NSs, and that it is the modified nature of NS-NNS interaction which provides learners with optimal input. A study was undertaken to determine whether input and interactional features already identified as characteristic of NS-NNS speech would occur with equal frequency in settings in which the NNSs had considerable proficiency and enjoyed peer status with the NS participants. Interactions (10 between NSs and 15 between a NS and a NNS) were analyzed among subjects who had been enrolled together in an undergraduate course for 15 weeks. Performance on four interactional features were examined: (1) temporal marking of verbs, (2) topic-continuing and topic nominating moves, (3) the use of question forms to mark topic-nominations, and (4) self- and other-repetitions. An attempt was thus made to determine to what extent characteristic differences between NS-NS and NS-NNS interaction could be found in such an interactional setting. It was found that NNS comprehension depends to a large extent on the work NNSs do to comprehend meaning in extended discourse situations. Implications of the findings for second language learning are discussed. (Author/AMH)

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Modification of discourse between native and nonnative speaker peers*

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Research in second language teaching has undergone an important change of direction for the last several years. Concern has been increasingly less with the controlled evaluation of methodologies and more with a comparison of formal instruction in a second language and second language acquisition outside the classroom. The assumption has been that a greater awareness of the resources available to the learner outside the classroom and what the learner does with such resources will ultimately inform our understanding of the contribution which formal instruction might make to language learners.

The comparison of second language acquisition with and without formal instruction has identified several important dimensions of the second language acquisition process. One area in particular is receiving increasing attention: the nature of the language data available to second language learners and the means by which such input is used by the learner to develop greater proficiency in the second language. This area of research may be conveniently referred to as the study of "input," "intake," and "interaction."

By "input" is meant all the samples of the target language to which a learner is exposed. This includes both written and spoken language; language not addressed directly to but available to the learner, as well as language specifically directed at the learner: in short, all the language data of which the learner might conceivably make use in developing hypotheses about the target language. A large body of recent research has confirmed that the language addressed to second language learners is "simplified" in a number of ways; as is the case in caretaker speech to children acquiring their native language, the linguistic forms used in addressing second language learners

are phonologically, semantically, and morpho-syntactically less complex than those in ordinary speech. Such linguistic simplifications presumably serve to facilitate comprehension.

Input is in principle fully observable; "intake" is not. "Intake" refers, quite simply, to that part of the input which the learner takes in and which presumably serves to further acquisition. The essential point is that input and intake are not the same. As Corder (1967) has pointed out, the fact that a learner is exposed to a linguistic form does not mean that that form has been perceived, and even less that it will be incorporated into the learner's interim grammar.

What determines whether given input will be taken in by a learner? Krashen (1978, 1980) hypothesizes that "optimal" input--input which is most likely to contribute to further acquisition of a language--has several features. First, it must be sufficient in quantity (a feature which, except in extreme cases, can only be measured after the fact). It must be given in a non-threatening atmosphere. Third, it must be attended to and understood by the learner. Finally, it must be at an appropriate level of difficulty: just a little beyond the learner's current linguistic competence. Implicit in Krashen's "input hypothesis" is a proposition which has attracted increasing support recently: namely, that being exposed to a spontaneous and authentic input of the target language is insufficient; what learners require in addition is speech addressed directly to themselves.

Indeed, it has been claimed (Long 1980) that the necessary condition for second language acquisition is sufficient involvement in interaction with native speakers (NSs). The basis for this claim is a growing body of research which suggests that interaction between NSs and learners of a second language (NNSs) is characteristically different from speech between NSs, and that it is the

modified nature of NS-NNS interaction which provides learners with optimal input.

Conversational interaction can be viewed as a cooperative enterprise in which the participants work to maximize communication (Garfinkle 1967). The discourse modifications which NSs make in interacting with NNSs reflect the willingness of NSs to assume a greater share of the interactional work than they automatically assume in conversation with fellow NSs. The modified nature of NS-NNS interaction results in substantial part from the adoption by NSs of a number of discourse behaviors whose purposes are (1) to insure comprehension and (2) to sustain interaction.

Recent research (Long 1981c) has suggested a number of strategies which NSs employ to prevent communication from breaking down--in other words, to insure comprehension. One such strategy is to nominate topics which are physically and/or temporally salient. Thus, NS-NNS discourse is characteristically more oriented in the "here and now" than is speech between NSs (Arthur et al. 1980; Long 1981a,b; Gaies 1981c). NSs also display a willingness to relinquish topic-control to NNS participants, presumably to insure as much as possible that topics will be familiar to the latter; this is characteristically done through the use of "or-choice" questions, as illustrated (in extreme form) by the following excerpt from Long (1981b):

> NS: OK. Now you know the question that's coming. What have what do you think of the United States or the American people or whatever it is that interests you or you notice?

Another strategy is reflected in the brevity of topic treatment in NS-NNS interaction. Topics in NS-NNS conversation typically involve fewer turns and the exchange of fewer bits of information (Arthur et al. 1980; Long 1981b). Still another accommodation made by NSs to NNSs is to make the nomination of

new topics as salient as possible. The relatively more frequent use of "left-dislocation" (Hatch 1978), conversational frames (for example, O.K., Well, So, Now), which Scarcella and Higa (1981) point to as a primary means by which NSs secure and maintain the attention of NNS participants and which are often reinforced by exaggerated stress and lengthened pauses, and the predominance of interrogative forms in topic nominations have all been seen as contributing to the salience of topic nominations. Equally prominent as a strategy for insuring comprehension is the frequency with which NSs use "comprehension-checks" (for example, Right?, O.K.?, Do you understand?), by which the NS attempts to elicit overt feedback from the NNS.

NSs also employ a number of tactical devices to repair communication breakdowns (and thus make input comprehensible and sustain interaction). One of these is to accept unintentional topic-switches by the NNS: in other words, to treat an inappropriate response by a NNS as a nomination of a new topic. The use of this device is illustrated by the following excerpt from Long (1980):

NS: Are you going to visit San Francisco? Or Las Vegas?
NNS: Yes I went to Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm.
NS: Oh yeah?

Another repair tactic is "decomposition" (which, as Long 1981c points out, is often used strategically as well). This device involves, as the term suggests, the breaking down of a complex question into separate questions, as illustrated by the following excerpt from Long (1981b):

NS: When do you go to the uh Santa Monica...You say you go fishing in Santa Monica, right?
NNS: Yeah.
NS: When?

NSs also request clarification and confirm their own comprehension (often by repeating a NNS's utterance with rising intonation). Other devices which are used both strategically and spontaneously--that is, both to sustain conversation and to repair those breakdowns that occur--include conversational fillers (for example, Really?, No kidding?, Yeah.) (Freed 1978), conversational supports (for example, Very good, That's great, I know how difficult this is) (Freed 1978, Scarcella and Higa 1981), and repetition, both of one's own utterances and of those of the NNS. The following excerpt from Gaies 1981a illustrates the use of repetition and the resulting "enriched redundancy" characteristic of NS speech to NNSs:

> NS: It looks like two horns of an animal. Do you know? An animal that has horns on top of its head? They're like ears, only they're on top of its head. O.K. Um, so they look like two horns that are coming up, and they practically meet. And then on, on the bottom is a..sort of a boat-like shape, O.K.? sort of like a rowboat. O.K.? So at the bottom you have a rowboat, and coming out of the rowboat you have two horns that almost meet on top, they almost make a circle, almost make a circle. Inside the circle it almost looks like a heart, a Valentine's Day heart, a heart? You know, for Valentine's Day?

A number of points should be emphasized here about the nature of these NS discourse modifications. First, the interactional devices just described are in no way unique to NS-NNS interaction; these devices are the means by which speakers in general sustain interaction and negotiate meaning. They are available for use and are indeed used in all discourse settings and are components of what can be called a speaker's "strategic competence" (Larsen-Freeman 1982). They seem to be used with greater frequency by any participant who has social, cognitive, or some other form of dominance. By comparison with speech in which the participants are sociolinguistically equal, the frequency with which these devices are used by NSs in interaction with NNSs

is considerably greater, and it is thus the relative frequency of their use by NSs that is claimed to be a characteristic of NS-NNS discourse.

It is not merely the fact that NS speech to NNSs differs from speech between NSs that makes the investigation of NS-NNS speech important for second language research, however. Of equal concern is the identification of factors which account for variation within NS-NNS interaction. Several of the variables which may account for variation in the nature and frequency of NS accommodations to NNSs have received exploratory attention. Long (1982) has called attention to the amount of experience a NS has in interacting with second language acquirers as a variable of NS-NNS speech; he suggests, for instance, that "decomposition" is used as a repair tactic primarily by NSs with prior experience with NNSs. Elsewhere, Long (1980, 1981a) has emphasized the nature of the communication as a variable affecting the degree of NS accommodation; communicative episodes which are genuinely task-oriented appear to elicit far more comprehensive interactional modifications by NSs than episodes in which the exchange of information is less goal-directed.

A third variable may be the age of the NNS. Scarcella and Higa (1981) have shown that adult NSs do much less negotiation work with adolescent second language acquirers than they do with younger second language acquirers. This may be explained in part by the initial expectations that adult NSs have of the older learners: that is, older learners may simply be expected to do more conversational work than younger learners. Scarcella and Higa showed that compared to younger learners, adolescents received much less simplified input and shared to a much greater degree the responsibility for sustaining discourse and insuring comprehension. The adolescent subjects in their study initiated more topics than did the younger learners, and they were much more active than the younger subjects in seeking clarification from NSs and checking their own comprehension.

A fourth factor--and from some points of view potentially the most influential one--might be the proficiency of the NNS. This variable is clearly central in Krashen's input hypothesis (see above, p. 2), since it is assumed that acquisition hinges on learners' achieving, through interaction with NSs, knowledge of structures and elements which are slightly beyond their competence. Such a view presupposes that input to NNSs is at least to some degree fine-tuned to the proficiency of the NNS.

Unfortunately, research in NS-NNS interaction has been generally confined to a relatively limited range of NS-NNS interactional settings. Due in part to methodological problems, most studies have NS subjects who have had, in addition to linguistic superiority, dominance over their NNS counterparts in at least one other domain. In the Arthur et al. (1980) study, the NSs were the dominant members in well-established dyadic relationships (clerks in clerk-customer dyads). In the Snow, van Eden and Muysken (in press) study, the NSs were municipal employees interacting with NNS members of the public. In all of the research based on second or foreign language classroom interaction, the NSs are teachers and thus clearly the dominant members of the groups in which they participated. In the Long 1981b study, at least two-thirds of the thirty-six NSs who participated in the NS-NNS interactions were teachers, which made them, in all likelihood, dominant in the dyads in which they were involved. Since it must be assumed that unequal role relationships of this sort will be reflected in interactional patterns (including addressing patterns, command and question initiation, and control of topic, one is left to wonder whether the interactional patterns identified in these studies would also hold for speech encounters in which the less proficient speaker enjoyed equality or dominance, either of a sociological nature or as the result of possessing the information to which the interaction was directed.

It was to explore further the variable of NNS proficiency on NS-NNS interaction that the present study was directed. Specifically, it sought to determine whether input and interactional features which previous research has identified as characteristic of NS-NNS speech (features which in some studies occurred significantly more frequently in NS-NNS speech than in speech between NSs) would occur with equal frequency in NS-NNS speech settings in which the NNSs had considerable proficiency and enjoyed peer status with the NS participants. The present study was designed to replicate (with certain modifications) a previous study of NS-NNS speech (Long 1981b), in which the NNSs were of limited proficiency in English.

Design and Procedures

A total of sixteen subjects (eleven NSs, five NNSs) provided the data for the present study. The subjects were all undergraduates enrolled in a course taught by the investigator. Participation by the subjects in the study was voluntary. Each subject was assigned to three dyads (two NSs participated in four dyads each). Each of the NSs participated in both NS-NS dyads and in NS-NNS dyads. Each of the five NNSs, all of whom were Malaysian females, participated in three NS-NNS dyads. There was a total of fifteen NS-NNS dyads and ten NS-NS dyads.

The subjects had been instructed in advance to orient their conversations around the course they had taken together: to discuss the course as a whole and/or any topics which they had found especially interesting or uninteresting. The subjects were also told that the tapes would not be listened to until several weeks after the completion of the semester and that they could for that reason feel free to conduct their conversations as they wished. These instructions were designed to provide the subjects with a loosely-defined task

that would enable them to assume considerable shared knowledge on the part of their co-participants; thus, the interactions would differ from those in previous studies of NS-NNS interaction (including Long 1981b), in which the participants knew very little or nothing about each other (and where there was certainly no shared experience comparable to having taken a course together for a full semester). On the other hand, the instructions left the subjects latitude to structure their conversations as they wished and, it was assumed, would allow for the observation of differences between NS-NS and NS-NNS interactional features, if indeed such would occur.

The audiotaped conversations, which lasted from seven to fifteen minutes, were transcribed by a research assistant and were checked by the investigator. Only the first six minutes (approximately) of each tape were used in assembling the corpora. For both the NS-NS corpus and the NS-NNS corpus, the analysis was conducted on a randomly selected sample of fifty topic-initiating moves, plus the topic-continuing moves elicited by them. The procedures used in identifying these moves were those described in Keenan and Schieffelin (1976), with two exceptions. First, the very first topic-initiating move in any conversation was excluded from consideration in the selection of the samples. Second, following Long (1981b), only topic-continuing moves contained in T-units (Hunt 1970)--that is, in independent clauses with or without subordinate clauses and nonclausal structures--were counted.

In this report, five of the variables examined are reported on. For each of the dependent variables, performance by the subjects in the present study is compared to performance by the subjects in Long (1981b), which, as was already noted, involved NNSs with quite limited proficiency and NS-NNS dyads in which the participants were previously unacquainted. The variables reported

on in the section below are as follows: (1) present/nonpresent temporal marking of verbs; (2) ratio of topic-continuing to topic-nominating moves; (3) percentage of topic-nominating moves in question form; (4) percentage of question types used in topic-nominations, and (5) self- and other-repetitions.

Results

(1) Present/nonpresent temporal marking of verbs. The comparative frequency of occurrence of verbs marked temporally for present and nonpresent was examined to test in rough form the claim that NS-NNS interaction is characteristically involved with topics in the "here and now"--a feature also associated with caretaker-child interaction (Cross 1977). In Long (1981b), the difference in temporal marking of verbs in NS-NS and NS-NNS interaction approached, but did not quite attain, statistical significance. In the present study, as in Long (1980) (in which the difference was significant at the .0005 level), the difference (significant at the .001 level) was greater than in Long (1981b). Collectively, these studies provide evidence that compared to speech between NSs, NS-NNS interaction is characteristically more oriented in the present (see Table 1 below).

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

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(2) Ratio of topic-continuing moves to topic-nominating moves. This ratio was computed for each sample to evaluate further the claim that topics

in NS-NNS interaction tend to be treated briefly (Arthur et al. 1980). The present study provides less powerful support for this claim than did Long (1981b), in which the difference in the ratio in NS-NS and NS-NNS interaction was significant at the .0005 level; in the present study, the difference did not attain statistical significance, as show in Table 2 below.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

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(3) Percentage of topic-nominating moves in question form. As was the case in Long (1981b), topic-initiating moves were encoded most frequently as questions. Their use in nominating topics was greater in NS-NNS interaction than in interaction between NSs, although the almost exclusive use of questions for nominating topics found in Long (1981b) was not found in the present study. Nevertheless, in the present study, as in Long (1981b), topic-nominations were encoded as questions significantly more frequently in NS-NNS interaction than in NS-NS interaction (see Table 3 below).

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

It should be noted, however, that while virtually all fifty topics in the NS-NNS sample were nominated by NSs in Long (1981b), in the present study

NNSs made 34% of the topic nominations. Thus, while the Long (1981b) data suggests that the use of interrrogatives to initiate topics is a characteristic strategy employed by NSs as they interact with NNSs to make new topics salient for NNSs, the data of the present study present different evidence. Questions are used to nominate topics somewhat less frequently, and they are used for this purpose even more frequently by NNSs (12/17 or 71%) than by NSs (22/33 or 67%).

(4) Percentage of question types used in topic-nominations. The distribution of question types in topic-nominating moves in the present study parallelled the Long (1981b) findings, as can be seen in Table 4 below. Indeed, the only difference was the preference, in the present study, for "yes/no" questions over "wh" questions in the NS-NNS data.

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

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(5) Self- and other-repetitions. Self- and other-repetitions are defined by Long (1980, 1981a) as partial or complete, exact or semantic repetitions of any speaker's utterance which occurs within five conversational turns (by both speakers) of the utterance. The frequency with which they are used may reflect an attempt by participants to enrich the redundancy of interaction. In the case of NS-NNS interaction, the use of repetition by NSs may be a means by which NNSs are offered additional processing opportunities and by which comprehension is assured.

Long (1980) found self- and other-repetitions to occur significantly more

frequently ($p = <.005$) in NS-NNS interaction than in speech between NSs. In the present study, repetition did not occur frequently, as indicated in Table 5 below. In view of the infrquency of occurrence of self- and other-repetitions, no test of statistical significance was performed.

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

Discussion

The present study, a modified replication of Long (1981b), confirms earlier claims of discourse features which are characteristic of NS-NNS interaction. These features, which reflect NS strategies designed to avoid conversational trouble, include the relatively greater use (compared to NS-NS interaction) of present tense-oriented topics and of questions as a device for making topics salient. In addition, topics are typically treated more briefly.

At the same time, however, the present study offers evidence that the frequency of use of discourse modifications by NSs in conversation with NNSs is variable. The present study suggests at least two factors which may account for such variability. The first of these is the proficiency of the NNS participant. In comparison to many studies of NS-NNS interaction which have used NNS subjects with limited proficiency, the present study used NNSs who were proficient enough in English that they could compete quite successfully with their NS peers in undergraduate coursework. Their proficiency in English, including their ability to handle the demands of

verbal interaction (as demonstrated by the fact that NNSs initiated one-third of all topics in the NS-NNS sample), may explain why topics in the NS-NNS were not treated as briefly as in the Long (1981b) NS-NNS data. It may be that NS discourse modifications are made in accordance with the perceived proficiency of the NNS participant, much as input modifications are geared to the proficiency of the NNS (Gaies 1977).

A second variable affecting the frequency of use of interactional modifications by NSs may be the shared knowledge which the subjects in the present study brought to their conversational tasks. In virtually all previous investigations of NS-NNS interaction, the members of conversational dyads were previously unacquainted (in quasi-experimental studies such as Arthur et al. (1980), the subjects were anonymous). In the present study, however, the subjects had taken an undergraduate course together for fifteen weeks; it is therefore safe to assume that the subjects undertook their conversational tasks with a considerable body of shared knowledge. This factor, quite possibly in conjunction with the fact that the NNSs were highly proficient in English, might account for the smaller difference in the length of topic treatment in the NS-NNS and NS-NS data, as well as for the greater use of non-interrogative forms in NS-NNS topic-initiations.

Variability in the degree of NS accommodation to NNSs may clarify further how the "work" done by a second language learner in interaction with NSs makes optimal input available and thus leads to further acquisition. This can perhaps be best illustrated by comparing two NS-NNS discourse episodes. The first is from the present study:

NS: Where are you from?
NNS: Malasia.
NS: Where at?
NNS: What?
05 NS: Where at in Malasia?

NNS: (Laughs) Malasia is just in the southeast of Asia. It's uh it's between Thailand and Singapore.
NS: No, I meant where at in Malasia.
NNS: Where at? Do you know, do you know where Malasia is?
NS: Do I know where it is?
NNS: Yeah.
NS: In Southeast Asia.
NNS: Uh-huh. In Taiping. (Pause) Where at in Malasia--I don't understand that question. (Pause) Where at
NS: Like when people say where were you born.
NNS: Uh-huh. I'm born in Malasia.
NS: Just Malasia. You don't have cities in Malasia?
NNS: We have, of course. (Laughs)
NS: Must have towns.
NNS: Yes, it is, yeah, it's a town named Taiping..hm..about, well, it's in the north of Malasia.

This episode illustrates quite well the importance of the work second language learners must do to get optimal input. The NNS in this episode ultimately arrives at an understanding of the phrase "Where at?" by seeking clarification three times from the NS (lines 4, 9, 13-4). To do so, however, the learner must ask questions of the NS (line 9), indicate non-comprehension by repeating the phrase with rising intonation (line 14), and generally sustain the conversation. Such work and its effects support the claim that "when nonnative speakers use strategies to get native speakers to clarify, they are frequently able to get just those parts of the input explained which they do not understand" (Scarcella and Higa, 1981, 429). Such input is optimal in precisely the ways Krashen has stipulated: it is being consciously attended to by the learner, and it is slightly beyond the learner's current competence. Furthermore, the fact that such input is ultimately made comprehensible through extended discourse, in which both participants are contributing to the negotiation of meaning, suggests that it is taking place in a cooperative, affectively positive atmosphere.

By contrast, the following episode from Long (1980) illustrates the failure of a learner to get optimal input:

NS: Are you going to visit San Francisco? Or Las Vegas?
NNS: Yes I went to Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm.
NS: Oh yeah?

This is a frequently-cited example of how NSs characteristically accept unintentional topic-switches by non-proficienc NNSs. It also illustrates how unnegotiated discourse fails to provide learners with optimal input. There is of course no way to ascertain what the effect might have been in this particular instance, but it is reasonable to suppose that minimal sharing of the interactional work by the NNS--in the form of a request for repetition of some other signal that the question was not understood--might have made this exchange productive. The exchange that took place can be safely assumed to have contributed little or nothing to acquisition by this learner.

The point might be raised that the willingness of the NS to encourage the NNS participant plays an important role in making interaction useful for acquisition. Certainly the NS in the following episode from Freed (1980) contributes more than did the NS in the previous episode from Long (1980):

NNS: Return to Iran this summer...go back here in Autumn?
NS: Will come back?
NNS: Ah yes, will come back in Autumn.

The input is this episode is optimal, again for the reasons hypothesized by Krashen. The element supplied by the NS is evidently not fully known by the NNS; furthermore, it is supplied at a moment when the NNS is attending closely. The contribution made by the NS confirms comprehension and prevents a communication breakdown; additionally, the intervention of the NS probably serves to encourage the NNS to pursue further interaction.

The willingness of NSs to share negotiation work with their NNS parti-

cipants depends on a number of factors. Certainly too little is known about this variable of NS behavior. Scarcella and Higa argue that the greater sharing of conversational work by NSs with adolescent learners than with younger learners was due in part to the initial expectations of the adult NSs. In the present study, the fact that the subjects were all academic peers (who furthermore had taken an undergraduate course together) may likewise have given rise to certain expectations on the part of the NSs about the ability of their NNS counterparts to share in conversational work. One must assume, however, that such initial expectations must be fulfilled to some degree during the course of the interactional event itself: that is, unless the ability of second language learners to do conversational work is in evidence, NSs will probably revert to a greater use of those interactional devices which allow them to assume full control of the shaping of discourse.

In extreme cases, where access to speakers of a language is severely limited--often as a consequence of social distance--acquisition of that language may not be possible. Where it is limited to some degree, we can observe communities of second language learners who fail to acquire fully the target language; for example, the failure of foreign guest-workers to acquire German (and to tend rather to acquire a pidginized variety of it) has been explained on these grounds (Heidelberger Forschungsprojekt 'Pidgin Deutsch' 1975, 1979). In second language acquisition settings in which access to interaction with NSs is available, such interaction is seen, as mentioned above (p. 2), as the critical condition for acquisition.

The crucial role of modified interaction may explain in large part differences in attainment by individual learners. It is fairly well established that second language learners vary considerably in the degree of contact they seek out with NSs of the target language. Fillmore's 1979 longitudinal study of five Spanish-speaking children acquiring English is a forceful illustration of

this. The most social and outgoing of her subjects acquired more English in three months than two of her other subjects would learn after a full year. This and other measures of language contact (for example, Seliger and Gingras 1976) make it clear that learners differ in the extent to which they seek out practice opportunities through which optimal input becomes available.

In addition, it must be noted that learners of equivalent proficiency differ greatly in the kind of conversational work they prefer to do. Studies of learner feedback in communication tasks (Gaies 1981a) suggest that some learners are willing to provide feedback to NS participants to signal comprehension but reluctant to attempt to orient or restructure interaction. Others seem eager to negotiate all aspects of conversation, even in situations when shared control of discourse may be inappropriate. Still others provide virtually no feedback at all; in failing to do even minimal conversational work, they increase the likelihood that NS input will be less than optimal, either because it is oversimplified or not simplified enough (and thus incomprehensible).

The investigation of NS-NNS interaction outside the classroom, and the evidence such research provides for the crucial role of interaction in second language acquisition, have implications for classroom language instruction. To date, one of the most striking insights provided by such research is a clearer understanding of the nature of the differences between discourse in and outside the classroom,

since these differences seem to indicate how little the conventional second language classroom provides in the way of optimal input.

One of the most convincing demonstrations of this is a recent study by Long and Sato (in press). The main purpose of this study was to investigate the 'forms and functions of teachers' questions in ESL classrooms, and to compare the findings with previously established patterns of (NS) questioning behavior in NS-NNS conversation outside classrooms' ( ). Long and Sato predicted that ESL teachers' classroom questions would typically aim at having learners display knowledge of material covered in class rather than eliciting referential or expressive information not already known by the teacher. Conversely, it was predicted that questions asked by NSs interacting with NNSs outside the classroom would serve primarily to elicit information not previously known to the questioner--in other words, interaction would involve the negotiation of meaning, and questions would have genuine communicative intent.

The findings confirmed these predictions. In the six ESL classrooms investigated, 'display' questions (for example, What's the opposite of 'up' in English?), which are intended to elicit information already known to the questioner, constituted more than half of all questions; furthermore, they outnumbered 'referential' questions by almost four-to-one. By contrast, referential questions were the predominant question type in NS-NNS interaction outside the classroom; even more striking was the almost total absence of display questions.

Much additional research is needed to determine the degree to which the classroom discourse observed by Long and Sato occurs at more advanced levels of second language instruction. Certainly, their findings provide important evidence that discourse episodes like the one in the Appendix are indeed characteristic of second language classroom interaction at beginning and low-intermediate levels:

The discourse observed by Long and Sato and illustrated by the above excerpt (which also comes from a beginning ESL class) from Gaies 1977 serves in principle to develop manipulative ability (or grammatical accuracy). This has traditionally been seen as the necessary foundation for the eventual use of the second language for communication, and even in recent overviews of a communicative approach to language teaching (for example, Littlewood 1981), this position is not seriously challenged. The classroom discourse which results will inevitably be controlled by the teacher, since the fundamental feature of display questions is that they generally do not invite learners to respond at length and even less to initiate new topics. Furthermore, since the content of responses to display questions is already known in advance, such discourse does not demand cooperative conversational work towards the negotiation of meaning. Conventional language classroom discourse reflects a continuing emphasis of form over meaning, accuracy over communication; for that reason, it is far less likely to offer optimal input to learners than discourse outside the classroom.

How this matter is viewed depends ultimately on how the role of the language classroom is defined. For those for whom second language classroom activities ought to mirror as much as possible and provide practice for the use of language outside the classroom, the answer is obviously to select those activities in which learners have constantly to negotiate meaning and thereby learn to do conversational work. Acquisition will be enhanced by classroom experience to the extent that learners work to obtain usable input--input to which they are consciously attending.

For those, on the other hand, for whom the language classroom ought to provide an exposure to the language not generally available in non-instructional settings, the difference between discourse in and outside the

classroom is a less critical matter.

The virtual abandonment of attempts to compare language teaching approaches under controlled conditions on a scale that permits generalizations to be drawn indicates that the wisdom of one position or the other is not likely to be demonstrated empirically in the near future. While it has become routine to appeal for further research in any area of applied linguistic inquirey, in the case of the analysis of interaction between NSs and NNSs, the need is genuine. Further investigation of the ways in which second language learners use interaction in and outside the classroom as a means of obtaining what is necessary for further acquisition will undoubtedly enable us to understand better how instruction in a second language affects the acquisition of that language.

T: I want first a volunteer to put the date on a letter. Put today's date. Can anyone write it? S-?
S-: (Goes to blackboard and writes date)
T: And where do you put the date? Where is that?
S-: In the left corner, in the top.
T: In the top right corner, uh-huh. The date today is November third. So you write November third, nineteen seventy-five.
S-: (Writes)
T: M-, what is S- doing? What is S- doing?
M-: She's writing letter, on the letter the date.
T: She is writing the date on the letter. Does anyone know what today's date is?
L-: November three. (Goes to board and writes date)
T: November three, November three, nineteeen seventy-five. Good. No period. N-, where did L- write the date on the letter?
N-: (No response)
T: This is right, and this is left, O K.? And this is top, bottom, and corners.
N-: In the top right corner.
T: In the top right corner. L- wrote the date in the top right corner of the letter. How did she write the date? That's an abbreviation. Do you know the regular word? November? L- wrote an abbreviation. O.K., who can put the greeting on the letter? Any greeting. (Learners mumble) Is it above or below the date? Where does the greeting go, above or below the date? (Unidentified learner responds) Below, right. The date goes above the greeting. The greeting goes below the date. O.K., B-, why don't you write a greeting? The letter can be to anyone.
B-: (Goes to board and begins writing)
T: P-, what is B- doing?
P-: Greeting.
T: Greeting..on the letter..below the date..under the date, below the date. D-, who's the letter to?
D-: (No response)
T: O.K., what name is that?
D-: Ali.
T: Is that a man or a woman?
D-: A man.
T: And what goes after the name?
D-: After..a comma.
T: A comma. (To B-) Other way down. Thank you. M-, what did B- do? This is past tense. If I say, "What is B- doing?", "she is writing the greeting on the letter." What <u>did</u> B- do?
M-: She write
T: She wrote.. She wrote, past tense..she wrote the greeting on the letter. What did B- do?
M-: She wrote the greeting
T: On the letter. Did she write the greeting above or below the date?
M-: Below date.
T: Below the date, O.K.

(Gaies 1977)

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Table 1. Present and nonpresent temporal marking of verbs in NS-NS and NS-NNS interaction

	Present		Nonpresent	
	n	%	n	%
NS-NS	555	61.39	349	38.61
	(317)*	(55.71)	(252)	(44.29)
NS-NNS	416	70.39	175	29.61
	(1268)	(59.84)	(851)	(40.16)

Present study: (χ^2 = 12.71, df = 1, p <.001)
Long 1981b: (χ^2 = 3.33, df = 1, p >.05, NS)

* In this and the following tables, figures in parentheses are from Long 1981b.

Table 2. Ratio of topic-continuing to topic-initiating moves in NS-NS and NS-NNS interaction

Move	NS-NS		NS-NNS	
Topic-initiating	50	(50)	50	(50)
Topic-continuing	546	(606)	416	(211)
Ratio	10.92	(12.12)	8.32	(4.22)

Present study: ($t = 1.59$, $df = 98$, $p > .11$, NS)
Long 1981b: ($t = 5.77$, $df = 98$, $p < .0005$)

Table 3. Proportion of topic-initiating moves encoded as questions, statements, imperatives, and fragments in NS-NS and NS-NNS interaction

	Questions		Statements		Imperatives		Fragments	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NS-NS	24	48	22	44	1	2	3	6
	(31)	(62)	(17)	(34)	(2)	(4)	(0)	(0)
NS-NNS	34	68	12	24	1	3	3	6
	(48)	(96)	(2)	(4)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)

Present study: (Questions x statements, $\chi^2 = 4.67$, df = 1, $p < .05$)
Long 1981b: (Questions x statements, $\chi^2 = 17.54$, df = 1, $p < .0005$)

Table 4. Proportions of topic-initiating moves (out of 50 total topic-initiations) formed by uninverted (intonation), wh, yes/no, and tag questions in NS-NS and NS-NNS interaction

	Uninverted		wh		yes/no		tag	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NS-NS	3	6	12	24	8	16	1	2
	(5)	(10)	(15)	(30)	(10)	(20)	(1)	(2)
NS-NNS	4	8	14	28	16	32	0	0
	(2)	(4)	(25)	(50)	(20)	(40)	(1)	(2)

Present study: (Wh x yes/no, $\chi^2 = 0.85$, df = 1, $p > .30$, NS)
Long 1981b: (Wh x yes/no, $\chi^2 = 0.01$, df = 1, $p > .90$, NS)

Table 5. Self-repetitions and other-repetitions in NS-NS and NS-NNS interaction (excluding comprehension checks)

	Self-repetitions	Other-repetitions
NS-NS	25	18
NS-NNS	34	16